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canal upon Franco-American relations seems somewhat disproportionate, we must give at least fair consideration to a point of view urged by one having intimate and personal knowledge of the feeling in both countries. Few fact stories, it may be said in conclusion, tell so clearly as does this of M. Bunau-Varilla's just how things were done and what motives actuated the doers.

THE FOOLISH LOVERS. By St. John G. Ervine. New York: The Macmillan Company.

To the public of Dickens and Thackeray, one thinks, a story like *The Foolish Lovers* would have been rather uninteresting; it would not have seemed robust enough either in idea or in sentiment. To the taste of to-day it is highly acceptable. It is, in fact, one of the best of that type of novel, notable for artistic reality and for sensitive humanity, which has been developed in the struggle between romance and photographic realism. Modern taste hardly asks for anything really better than such a suave and frank, sympathetically critical and wisely humorous treatment of life as is found in this book. Its tone just suits the mood of the cultivated man or woman of today who has outgrown youthful tastes but has retained a certain independence of view-point. Many of our best novels nowadays are simply modest and pleasing studies of life, with a good deal of an author's quick observation and unusual personality in them. It is probable that a story like *The Foolish Lovers* represents much more truly the actual literary mind of the time than does the work of the intellectually restless radicals or that of the emotionally restless, the ever-protesting and experimenting, realistic-romantics.

The people in *The Foolish Lovers* are all, more than anything else, like the folks we know—not one seems the least bit artificial;—yet each has his own distinctive characteristics and his very real *numen*, his inviolable personality, so that what happens to him must arouse genuine, though slight, emotion. "Uncle Matthew," the romantic dreamer, though not strikingly original, is not like any other romantic dreamer one has ever known or read about; and "Uncle William" is a triumph in the way of a commonplace character who isn't really commonplace. There is a great deal of what used to be called "the mystery of womanhood" about Eleanor" along with just an ordinary, practical mind and nice instincts. All the persons of the story experience things in their own way—not in your way or mine or Mr. Ervine's. So the narrative always has freshness, and in the whole picture there is a commendable "unity in variety."

John MacDermott is a bit different from the rest. This young man, with a trace of Barry Lyndon in his make-up and a good deal of naive youthfulness, might have been, perhaps, a genius or a leader. But his unusual gift seems to have exhausted itself in an original wooing; and after writing mediocre plays and novels in the course of a journalistic experience in London, he found that the more excellent way was to return to his native town of Ballyards in Ulster and to go to work in his uncle's general store. Of course, his wife had a good deal to do with the decision; but even apart from this very natural factor, John MacDermott turns out to be of much more

account as a human being than as a genius or as a scion of the proud MacDermott stock—and herein precisely lies his appeal.

What one unconsciously craves in a novel is the discovery of people who are really uncommon—not simply different or extreme. Of course, what one would really like would be a new Shakespeare or Homer, or even a new Scott or Dickens, provided these latter could shake off the old conventions and adopt the new. It is scarcely too much to say that acquaintance with Falstaff, Pickwick, or even Alan Breck, prolongs life. Reflective novels, like *The Foolish Lovers*, do not communicate vigor, as the old stories did or seemed to do. But that is about all that can be said against Mr. Ervine's sound and pleasant story. In charm and in acuteness—the two qualities generally most worth commending in the fiction of the day, in which hysteria is so apt to take the place of power—*The Foolish Lovers* is pre-eminent.